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## HUMAN FACTORS IN FARM AND HOME DEVELOPMENT 1/

### Self-orientation

Probably the first and most important phase of any new program, method, or idea, is that of mentally preparing oneself for it. Let's look at several points in farm and home development.

1. Definition. Farm and home development as a new emphasis in extension work simply means doing extension education work by working with the whole family together and in terms of the whole farm and home situation, rather than only in terms of specific projects, problems, and subjects separately.

2. Its primary objective is to provide a kind of extension assistance which will effectively help families achieve their goals and fullest potentialities by working with each family in terms of its total farm and family situation, with the idea that such work will further help the family more rapidly learn and adopt modern agricultural and home economics ideas and practices and better make adjustments to changing conditions.

Thus, it is as much or more of a method - a philosophy - of working with the people, as it is a program of content. It complements other methods, and does not necessarily do away with any. It does also contemplate content - that families will learn principles of situation analysis, decision making, farm and home management.

3. Think about it in relation to education and social theory. We know that no two individuals are exactly alike; that every family is in its own peculiar situation; and every farm and home has its special characteristics. Education is the production of changes in attitude, knowledge, and skills. It is a matter of growth or development. And each family is somewhere on the scale between Zero Development on one end and Maximum or Fullest Development according to its potentialities at the other end. Our job is to help families progress or move forward on this scale or ruler.

We know also that every person lives and works in a peculiar situation; that this is very much family governed and family conditioned, and that various factors, ranging from managerial skill to amount of capital to personal health, enter into what a given farmer or a given farm woman can do with extension teachings. We know, too, that every farm has its peculiar soil, location, and other factors which to great degree determine its best uses and possibilities.

1/ Outline for talk and discussions by E. J. Niederfrank, Rural Sociologist, Federal Extension Service, in North Dakota Annual Extension Staff Conference, January 10-13, 1956.



At the same time you also know that there is an interdependence about the farm and home enterprises and activities which specialized teachings do not always recognize. Farms are managed and operated in terms of an overall total operation and we need to provide extension education in these same terms if we are to be of most help to families. Simply to provide bits of specific information or help about such special things as culling the chickens, making the terraces, or spraying for weeds is not enough, without helping the farmer and his wife considering the specific problem in relation to the total farm operation. Maybe they shouldn't have any chickens at all. Interdependence is also true in home and youth programs.

Yes, the farm and home unit method of extension work is sound in theory and it is true to experience. No extension worker - county, State, or federal - can work on farm and home development as defined very long without finding that it changes his philosophy and enriches his whole program and procedure. Historically it is not exactly new. It is what was done much during the early days of extension 50 years ago. Later we somehow got away from it but we need to keep on doing it now, adjusted to modern times.



Now Let Us Think About Human Nature -- Some Basic Characteristics

1. People are not all alike. They may differ in nationality or cultural background, in age, schooling, occupation, income, tenure, religion, participation in organizations, size of family, health, ambition, aptitude or skill, patterns of neighboring, attachment to local community, and in other ways. These factors often greatly affect their attitudes, habits, and actions or responses. Therefore, they should be taken into account in working with families. This point has several applications in both program projection and farm and home development.

2. People do not live alone; they associate with one another and preferably with others of their own kind. Most of them also like to belong to one or more organizations. Putting 1 and 2 together, think about the main characteristics of the people you are trying to reach at given times, and be careful in forming groups to do so in such ways that will be pleasant to those concerned.

3. The family is the most important human group and the main center of people's interest or concern. Work with people in terms of their family interest and conditions. Let your work strengthen family interests; not weaken them.

4. Families do have hopes and ambitions, standards and values, objectives and plans. Usually these are in considerable measure culturally and community governed. Education development to be effective must start with and keep even with family hopes and plans.

I am quite sure that most families are interested in more than just their economic problems. For example, I would not be surprised if you found that almost every family has some kind of a health problem. They also want to have a nice house and conveniences that others have. They will want to raise the children properly and will be concerned about giving them the right start on leaving home. Most families also want happy relations with neighbors and friends, and to be somebody themselves. Every family also has community interests, because many farming and living matters depend upon community goods and services and activities.

5. Human nature has certain basic desires. (a) Most people want security, both economic and psychologically, social approval. They also want (b) recognition and feeling of importance; (c) response or affection and friendship; and (d) they like new experiences. Remember these in your work with different persons, individually or in groups, and especially with leaders and others with whom you come in contact most.

6. People invariably have some degree of attachment to a given locality and usually they are most attached to the immediate community; at least this is important in certain group activities. Of course, you know that locality attachments are in many places today in a state of flux; community relations and attachments are changing. In many areas larger communities are taking shape. However, by and large, attachment to the immediate community is still more important than that to a larger or more distant community or to the county. This is especially true for group planning and action by people who otherwise do not mingle much or who are new to certain programs. In general it is best to not start something new in big fashion; start small on a more intimate community basis first. Every society - be it a group or community, a county or larger society - has its more or less definite patterns of communication and leadership or influence. They may differ somewhat for different types of problems or activities. Be as understanding of them as you can.

7. There is tremendous power of influence in a group. Where there is group support, people are more likely to act. People often do things according to the approval of others. Make sure in extension planning and teaching that the group does some of it, not just the expert up front. Group action is a main motivator. This is why the discussion method is so important - it is a main means of involving people, of teaching people through others.

8. People will respond better to their own ideas and to projects that they have had a part in planning than to those that merely come in from the outside. They will believe more in an idea or project and work harder on it if they have been involved somehow in planning it. People also like to do things for themselves, not to be merely provided services or have things done for them, but they do not like to be overruled. Give them time to make up their mind. Stop short of the last sales argument and let them ask for more. All of this is the very basis of doing program development with the people.

At the same time all planning and teaching should take cognizance of the main steps in the learning-adoption process. These are: (a) awareness or attention, (b) interest, (c) decision to see it demonstrated elsewhere, (d) trial by oneself, and (e) finally adoption or rejection of the idea based on own trial.

9. People often learn or accept more from other people, and especially from someone like themselves, than from the professional expert. This is why it is important to make careful and proper use of local informal leadership or influence among the people, and of the discussion method. Be sure that the leaders you work with are respected by, and have influence among, the people you are attempting to serve. This requires some understanding of the communication and influence patterns of the people.

10. People will more often react favorably when they know what the matter is all about, and when it meets a felt need or there is a common recognition of the problem. Until then you will notice inaction and resistance. Keep people informed. Explain situations, whys, and wherefores. Tell them the predicaments.

SO UNDERSTAND AND THINK ABOUT THE PEOPLE. ONE OR MORE OF THE ABOVE POINTS FREQUENTLY HAS APPLICATION IN EXTENSION WORK, AND ESPECIALLY IN FARM AND HOME DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRAM PROJECTION.

Application to Farm and Home Development

Now let us look at some of the steps and questions in farm and home development and discuss them in the light of human factors. (Elaborated and discussed by audience).

1. Deciding on which families.
2. Agriculture and home agent teamwork.
3. The first interview.
4. Winning family interest. How explain farm and home development?
5. Inventorying and analyzing the situation; walking the farm and home.
6. Shall we use the individual or the group approach?
7. What about the farm and home plan?
8. Getting families to recognize their problems or needs and to state objectives or wants.



9. Follow up work with the family.
10. What do we teach and do for the family?
11. Relating to other extension activities and programs.
12. Using the farm and home development families as demonstrations.
13. What should we do with farm and home development in program planning?
14. What about telling regular county extension organizations and county commissioners about farm and home development?
15. Getting farm and home development spread to more families.
16. How long should one stay with the same family?
17. Evaluating results and going ahead.